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ABSTRACT

The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, students, and the general public in Alberta, Canada with an overview of results from the June 1998 administration of the English 33 Diploma Examination. The information in the report is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports. The report notes that of the 6,478 students who wrote the examination, 92.3% of these students achieved the acceptable standard, and 4.1% of these students achieved the standard of excellence. The report provides statistical data and examiners' comments for the personal response to literature assignment, the functional writing assignment, and the response to visual communication assignment. It also presents statistical data, examiners' comments, and a discussion of examination questions on the reading portion that many students answered incorrectly. (RS)

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English 33

Diploma Examination Results
Examiners' Report for June 1998

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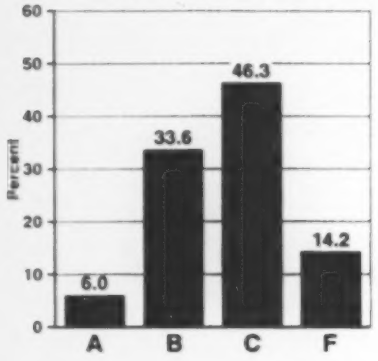
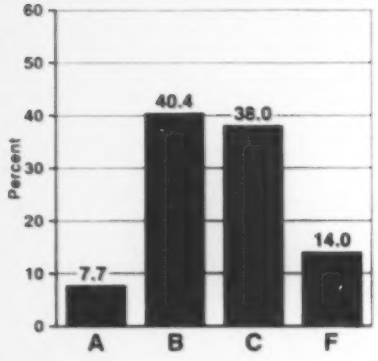
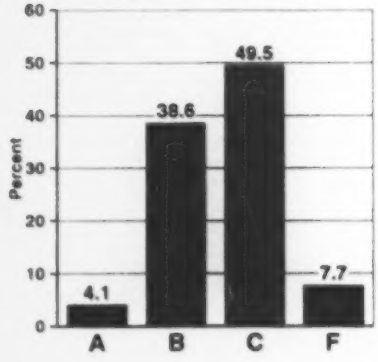
School-Awarded Mark



Diploma Examination Mark



Final Course Mark



CS 216476

The summary information in this report provides teachers, school administrators, and students with an overview of results from the June 1998 administration of the English 33 Diploma Examination. This information is most helpful when used in conjunction with the detailed school and jurisdiction reports that are provided electronically to schools and school jurisdiction offices. A provincial report containing a detailed analysis of the combined November, January, June, and August results is made available annually.

Description of the Examination

The English 33 Diploma Examination consists of two parts: a written-response section and a reading section. Each section is worth 50% of the total examination mark.

Achievement of Standards

The information reported is based on the final course marks achieved by 6 478 students who wrote the June 1998 examination.

- 92.3% of these students achieved the acceptable standard (a final course mark of 50% or higher).
- 4.1% of these students achieved the standard of excellence (a final course mark of 80% or higher).

Overall, student achievement in English 33 was satisfactory. Students showed that they were able to read different kinds of texts and respond with varying degrees of success to questions that differed in type, complexity, and difficulty. The majority handled the longer texts on Part B successfully. On Part A they demonstrated an increased tendency to plan, to synthesize information (especially on the Functional Assignment), and to organize their writing logically and convincingly.

Provincial Averages

- The average school-awarded mark was 60.6%.
- The average diploma examination mark was 63.2%.
- The average final course mark, representing an equal weighting of the school-awarded mark and the diploma examination mark, was 62.4%.

Alberta EDUCATION

Part A: Written Response

In responding to Part A, students are required to complete three writing assignments, each of which assesses a variety of writing and thinking skills.

Readers will find the results most meaningful in the context of the assignments and the scoring descriptors. The most useful starting place for reviewing the results is at the **3 Satisfactory** level. Such work exceeds the pass mark of 50%. The scoring criteria for this examination were provided in the 1997–98 *English 33 Information Bulletin, Diploma Examinations Program*. **The scoring criteria have been revised effective this school year**. Readers should check the 1998–99 *English 33 Information Bulletin, Diploma Examinations Program*, posted on Ednet for the revised scoring criteria.

The table below outlines the requirements for each assignment, the categories for scoring each assignment, the amount each category contributes to the total mark (Parts A and B combined), and the percentage of students achieving at the various levels. In June 1998, the average raw score for Part A was 31.4 out of 50.

By comparing school and jurisdiction results to the provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examination Blueprint and Percentage Distribution of Scores

Description of the Writing Assignment	Scoring Category	Proportion of Total Mark(%)	Percentage Distribution of Scores									
			Excellent		Proficient		Satisfactory		Limited		Poor	
			5	4.5	4	3.5	3	2.5	2	1.5	1	Ins*
Personal Response to Literature The student is required to read a piece of literature and to write a response from a personal perspective.	Thought and Detail	10.0	1.5	2.4	16.4	17.0	37.6	13.6	9.2	1.3	0.5	0.5
	Organization	5.0	1.5	2.4	15.1	17.6	41.6	12.8	7.2	0.9	0.3	0.5
	Matters of Choice	5.0	1.7	1.9	12.9	16.8	46.0	12.2	7.1	0.7	0.2	0.5
	Matters of Correctness	5.0	1.7	2.8	14.4	17.2	36.1	13.7	11.4	1.7	0.5	0.5
Functional Writing The student is required to write a response to a particular situation (e.g., a business letter or speech).	Thought and Detail	10.0	1.9	3.6	17.9	18.9	32.2	12.2	9.6	1.7	1.2	0.6
	Writing Skills	5.0	1.3	2.5	13.3	16.7	37.0	14.4	11.9	1.7	0.7	0.6
Response to Visual Communication The student is required to respond to a photograph. The student writes about main ideas in relation to techniques of visual communication.	Thought and Detail	5.0	0.8	1.1	8.5	12.3	42.5	19.3	12.1	1.4	0.4	1.5
	Writing Skills	5.0	0.8	1.1	9.1	12.3	43.8	15.5	13.1	1.9	0.9	1.5

***Ins** (Insufficient) is a special category that includes students who did not attempt the assignment, who wrote too little to evaluate, or who wrote answers that were completely off-topic.

Note: The shaded portion represents the percentage of students who achieved or exceeded the acceptable standard. Students with scores of 4, 4.5, and/or 5 have achieved the standard of excellence.

Examiners' Comments

Section I: Personal Response to Literature

The excerpt from *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* was accessible to most students and evoked many thoughtful responses, often two to three pages in length. Most students agreed that "right" attitudes are essential for achieving goals, and developed a variety of approaches to the topic. Some students developed a philosophical approach; these responses varied in thoughtfulness from superficial to perceptive. Other students used literature, personal examples, or observation to support and clarify their ideas.

Students developed ideas such as "Throughout history we have seen that the people with the best attitudes have brought forth the greatest accomplishments," "People with good attitudes get more things accomplished in their life. People with bad attitudes go through life with hardships and troubles," and "not all positive attitudes bring out positive outcomes." Some students defined "right" attitude as any attitude that allows you to achieve your goals or to love what it is that you are doing. One student remarked that "the right attitude is contagious."

Many students drew their examples from familiar contexts: school, family, sports, and work. Frequently, students developed adequate or superior responses without reference to literature. However, a significant number of students used examples from literature or films to support their opinions; for example, *Death of a Salesman, The Bean Trees, Fahrenheit 451, King Rat, Letters from Wingfield Farm, Jurassic Park, Of Mice and Men, Ordinary People*, and *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.

Students who achieved **3 Satisfactory** demonstrated a defensible understanding of the excerpt and responded to the assignment in a conventional way. Generally, students at this level formed an opinion, commented on the reading selection, and then used personal observations or examples from literature to support their opinion. Students generally revealed that they have learned to impose order on their writing; even students who misunderstood the excerpt or the assignment organized their content in a logical manner. Students also displayed general control of the basics of correct sentence construction, usage, grammar, and mechanics.

Students who achieved **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** interpreted the excerpt in a well-considered and even insightful way, understanding and responding to the subtleties of the excerpt. Their effectively organized responses included introductions purposefully designed to provide direction for the reader. They were able to choose words and manipulate syntax for stylistic effect, and they demonstrated competent and even confident control of *Matters of Correctness*.

Section II: Functional Writing

In June 1998, the Functional Writing assignment required students to assume the role of a student representative on the Nalwen High School Graduation Council. Students were to write a letter to the editor to convince Nalwen residents that the process followed by the graduation council to select a supplier of graduation rings for the Grade 12 students at NHS was both open and fair. Mr. John C. Reyburetti, the owner of Nalwen Goldsmiths, had written a letter to the editor of *The Nalwen News* stating that the selection process that chose Davcar Alberta to supply the rings was unfair.

In their letters, students were expected to indicate purpose, to consider audience, and to use an appropriately persuasive tone. Information provided to help students respond to the assignment included: Mr. Reyburretti's letter, a list of six steps used in the process of selection, a chart comparing the features offered by three companies, and a table showing the results of the student vote on the selection of the company to supply graduation rings.

Most students understood the assignment and used an appropriate tone. Markers were aware that letters to the editor frequently feature a stronger tone than would be acceptable in other letter forms. They considered each paper carefully in order to differentiate between an impassioned, forceful tone and a rude, offensive one. Successful responses explained how Mr. Reyburetti's proposal was rejected in a fair and open process. Responses in which the tone inflamed the issue rather than settling it, failed to fulfill the purpose. Mr. Reyburetti was inflammatory in his letter which may have caused some students to respond somewhat emotionally; therefore, responses containing minor slips in tone were not penalized.

Some students addressed their comments directly to Mr. Reyburretti in an open letter; this approach was successful only if it didn't interfere with the purpose of the letter. Interestingly, few students dealt with the rumour that Mr. Reyburetti mentioned. Students may have felt that the rumour did not warrant a response; they could reasonably have

seen addressing the rumor as going beyond the scope of the assignment that asked them to show that the selection process was fair and open.

Many students, apparently recognizing the importance of synthesis, used the provided information appropriately. Often, students were apologetic to Mr. Reyburetti and several thanked him for supporting the football team. Responses indicating that some support was in enclosures (e.g. inclusion of the student vote chart) had to be judged individually since some were effective and others were not.

It was apparent that the fairness of the ring selection was a relevant issue for many students who argued persuasively that the process was indeed fair.

Students achieving **3 Satisfactory** provided information sufficient to fulfill the purpose of their letters. Using an appropriate (though occasionally forceful) tone, they identified their purpose and, using some of the information provided for support, demonstrated that the selection process was open and fair.

Students achieving **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** sustained a precise awareness of audience and an appropriate, persuasive, and often diplomatic tone. Their letters contained specific details that provided a perspective that would persuade readers that the selection process was open and fair.

Section III: Response to Visual Communication

In the black and white photograph included on the June 1998 English 33 Diploma Examination, a man in uniform is approached by five running, smiling people. The foremost young woman appears to have both feet off the ground, and her arms are extended. The background of the picture is uncluttered.

Most students formed generalizations about this photograph which attests to its accessibility. Students often chose an exploratory approach and provided generalizations near the conclusion of their compositions. In other cases, students developed an *implicit* interpretation of the photograph by discussing a number of details from the photograph. Some students connected an interpretation to experiences in their own lives.

Many students made interesting observations such as the plain, simple background gives us "the feeling that there is nothing else going on anywhere, and if there is it's not as important or as great as what they are experiencing at that moment," and "today we should feel that we have someone important to look up to and admire." Some students noted that all of the people in the photograph are focussed on the same event, which emphasizes the family as a unit. One student observed that the soldier's back is to the camera, implying that his job is done. Another suggested that the man's face was not shown since men are not supposed to show emotion.

Students developed generalizations such as "The photograph shows the importance of the family," "this picture suggests that fathers are heroes in many ways," and "having only one parent may not be enough to handle families."

Other students entered personally into the assignment to tell about a family reunion. At times, students used narrative to launch their responses or support an appropriate idea. Occasionally, however, students digressed into storytelling which was not appropriately connected to the photograph. Markers had to judge each of these narratives on its individual merit relative to the assigned task.

Despite the exploratory nature of this writing, responses indicate that students are more conscious of the need to organize their material. More students are using the planning boxes and more students are deliberately structuring their responses.

Students who achieved **3 Satisfactory** interpreted the photograph in a conventional way, providing generalized support. Many students focused their dicussion on the details in the photograph rather than offering interpretation of those details. Some also noted photographic technique.

Students who achieved **4 Proficient** and **5 Excellent** provided well-considered interpretations of the photograph. These students explained how the details in the photograph and the photographer's choices (focus, movement, camera angle, background, contrast, and composition) reinforced their interpretations.

Question-by-Question Results

Question	Key	Difficulty*
1	B	50.3
2	C	56.9
3	C	70.1
4	B	79.2
5	A	72.3
6	D	39.6
7	C	44.7
8	A	83.0
9	D	67.5
10	A	62.8
11	C	65.4
12	D	48.5
13	A	64.2
14	D	41.2
15	D	84.0
16	B	77.8
17	D	82.3
18	D	76.8
19	B	75.9
20	B	42.7
21	B	85.8
22	C	68.5
23	B	75.5
24	A	40.4
25	C	66.9
26	B	44.4
27	–	–
28	D	78.0
29	A	71.4
30	D	82.5
31	B	83.3
32	B	82.2
33	D	53.7
34	A	56.5
35	C	82.8
36	–	–
37	D	76.3
38	D	75.8
39	D	57.1
40	A	54.4
41	A	73.1
42	A	44.5
43	B	82.7
44	D	48.0
45	C	48.9
46	B	61.0
47	C	76.4
48	C	76.0
49	A	80.1
50	B	70.7
51	D	54.6
52	B	67.4
53	A	62.8
54	C	58.7
55	B	70.1
56	A	54.7
57	D	68.4
58	A	75.8
59	C	78.1
60	D	48.3
61	D	66.4
62	C	51.5
63	C	70.6
64	A	49.8
65	B	54.7
66	B	45.8
67	C	66.4
68	C	51.1
69	A	53.6
70	B	63.1

*Difficulty—percentage of students answering the question correctly

Part B: Reading

The table at the left shows question-by-question results and the keyed answers. Parallel tables in the school and jurisdiction reports show the percentage of students who selected each alternative. By comparing school and jurisdiction results to provincial results presented here, teachers can determine areas of strength and weakness in the achievement of their students and, consequently, areas of potential strength and weakness in their programs.

Examination Blueprint

Part B: Reading has a value of 70 marks,* one mark for each multiple-choice question. Each question is classified in two ways: by the curricular content area being tested and by the thinking (process) skill required to answer the question. The examination blueprint illustrates the distribution of questions in June 1998 according to these classifications.

	Classification by Thinking Skills			
Classification by Course Content	**Literal Understanding**	**Inference and Application**	**Evaluation**	**Total**
Meanings (Main Ideas/ Details)	38, 41, 57	5, 9, 16, 22, 25, 28, 29, 30, 35, 36*, 37, 39, 42, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 58, 61, 67, 69, 70	4, 15, 34, 43, 56	31 Items (22%)
Relationships of Form and Content		1, 7, 10, 12, 17, 26, 27*, 31, 32, 33, 40, 59, 64, 66	24, 68	16 Items (11.5%)
Human Experience and Values		3, 6, 11, 13, 14, 18, 19, 20, 63, 65	2, 8, 21, 23, 60, 62	16 Items (11.5%)
Knowledge of Revision and Editing	44,48,50	45, 46, 47, 49		7 Items (5%)
Total	6 Items (4%)	51 Items (37%)	13 Items (9%)	70 Items (50%)

*Questions 27 and 36 were dropped from the examination before mark calculations were made. The total possible, therefore, was 68.

*Subtest Results***

Results are reported in average raw scores.

Total Part B: 43.7 out of 68

Course Content

- Meanings: 20.6 out of 30
- Relationships of Form and Content: 8.7 out of 15
- Human Experience and Values: 10.0 out of 16
- Knowledge of Revision and Editing: 4.6 out of 7

Readers are cautioned **not to compare subtest results because the subtests are not of equal difficulty. Instead, readers should compare these provincial subtest results with their own school subtest results.

Examiners' Comments

The following table gives results for six multiple-choice questions selected from the examination. These six questions were chosen to represent the range of difficulty present in Part B (39.6 to 85.8). They also represent the question types for all of the course content categories that appear in the blueprint on page 5. The table shows the percentage of students in five groups that answered each question correctly. The comments following the table address some of the decisions that students may have made and some of the skills they may have used to answer these questions correctly.

Percentage of Students Correctly Answering Selected Multiple-Choice Questions

	Question Number					
Student Group	**6**	**14**	**21**	**26**	**48**	**70**
All Students	39.6	41.2	85.8	44.4	76.0	63.1
Students achieving the *standard of excellence* (80% or higher, or A) on the whole examination	71.1	70.5	97.0	72.7	96.4	90.4
Students achieving the *acceptable standard* who received marks between 65% and 79%, or B, on the whole examination	50.2	52.3	94.5	54.5	87.5	76.0
Students achieving the *acceptable standard* who received marks between 50% and 64%, or C, on the whole examination	28.0	31.4	85.2	35.7	69.4	53.9
Students who have not achieved the *acceptable standard* (49% or less), on the whole examination	23.2	19.4	56.0	23.8	49.3	35.9

6. Hanna Louise's description of herself as a "thin, unadventurous child" (line 79) *contrasts* with her description of herself in

A. "a wet little waif from the park" (line 89)
B. "Bashfully . . . we would talk to each other" (lines 102–103)
C. "I would shyly nod my assent" (line 116)
•D. "I'd sign my name, Hanna Louise, with a flourish" (line 118)

Question 6 was one of a set of nine questions on the excerpt "End of the Empire" by Isabel Huggan.

Question 6 was classified under the reporting category *Human Experience and Values*. It was the most difficult question on Part B—only 39.6% of the students answered it correctly, and it discriminated well between those students achieving high scores on the examination and those achieving lower scores.

Answering question 6 correctly required careful reading of both the excerpt and the question. Students needed to understand that Hannah Louise saw herself as a "thin unadventurous child" in real life and, by contrast, a girl confident enough to sign her name "with a flourish" in her fantasy. Students who read carefully and knew the meaning of flourish recognized the *contrast* and chose the correct answer. Most of the students who missed this question chose alternative A, because they likely misread the question or guessed at the meaning of waif.

14. The phrase that **most strongly** suggests the motivation for the speaker's "envy" (line 9) is

A. "quick as a lizard" (line 4)
B. "that's all / there is" (lines 8-9)
C. "private as a witch" (line 14)
***D.** "choosing – that's the word" (line 16)

Question 14 was one of a set of six questions on the poem "Neighbour" by Carol Shields.

Question 14 was classified under the reporting category *Meanings (Main Ideas/Details)*. It was a difficult question with only 41.2% of all students choosing the keyed response. It was an evaluation question in that each of the alternatives was, to some degree, correct. To select the best answer, students had to weigh each alternative carefully and choose the one containing the detail that most strongly prompts the speaker's "envy."

The details mentioned in alternatives A, B, and C pique the speaker's interest in the neighbour, but it is the neighbour's freedom to choose to appear mysteriously independent, that sparks envy in the speaker.

21. Harry's immaturity is **most clearly** revealed by Eve's statement

A. "Oh no. Harry will kill me" (line 8)
***B.** "Harry greets me with that insane noise at the breakfast table every morning" (line 55)
C. "Senility strikes early in Harry's family" (line 58-59)
D. "Last week Harry joined the Mounted Constabulary" (line 76)

Question 21 was one of a set of ten questions on an excerpt from the play "Waiting for the Parade" by John Murrell.

Question 21 was classified under the reporting category *Human Experience and Values*. It was the easiest question on Part B as it was answered correctly by the vast majority of students who wrote in June 1998. Almost all (97%) of students who achieved the standard of excellence answered correctly, and 56% of students who achieved below the acceptable standard chose the keyed response.

Like question 14, this is an evaluation question. Visualizing the details in each of Eve's statements would have helped students see that a grown man imitating machine gun noise at the breakfast table each morning (alternative B) **most clearly** indicates immaturity.

26. The simile "for memory is as fragile as the frost on windows" (line 25) serves to suggest that memory is

A. rigid
***B.** elusive
C. chilling
D. transparent

Question 26 is one of a set of nine questions on an excerpt from "A Sip of Dandelion Wine" by Ray Bradbury.

Question 26 was classified under the reporting category *Relationships of Form and Content*. It was a relatively challenging question, but as can be seen on the table on page 6, this question discriminated well between students who achieved higher scores on the examination and those who achieved lower scores.

Most students achieving an "A" or "B" knew what a simile was and understood the comparison in "for memory is as fragile as the frost on windows" Thus, they were able to see that memory, like frost on a window, is fleeting, or "elusive" (alternative B). It is interesting to note that 38.3% of students receiving "F" on the examination chose alternative C. "chilling" as their answer to Question 26. Perhaps these students lacked a working knowledge of figurative language. Instead they made a literal connection between "frost" in the stem and "chilling" in the alternatives.

48. To further edit paragraph 4, Robin should place a comma between

A. "result" and "from" in the first sentence
B. "infections" and "and" in the second sentence
*C. "asthma" and "humidity" in the second sentence
D. "lenses" and "less" in the third sentence

Question 48 is one of a set of seven questions that were designed to test students' knowledge of revision and editing.

Question 48 was classified under the reporting category *Knowledge of Revision and Editing*. In answering questions such as this, students are required to make decisions about appropriate revisions to a piece of writing. This question was a relatively easy one. It discriminated quite well, however, between students achieving the acceptable standard or higher and those scoring below the acceptable standard. The fact 76% of students answered correctly, indicates that a significant number of students understand the use of this punctuation mark. English 33 students should be in control of basic conventions such as comma use.

70. From the reader's perspective, the character in this excerpt who comes closest to assuming the role of the "mythical kid" is

A. Kozicki
*B. Hendershot
C. Mrs. Kozicki
D. Mrs. Hendershot

Question 70 is the last of a set of twelve questions on the excerpt from "Mythical Kid" by Don Dickinson. It is also the last question on the examination and it is interesting to note that only 28 students (from a total of 6478) made no attempt to answer it.

Question 70 was classified under the reporting category *Meanings (Main Ideas/Details)*. It was of average difficulty (63.1%) and discriminated very well. Students achieving high scores noted the evidence supporting Hendershot as the boy who comes closest to assuming the role of "mythical kid." They recognized that it was foolish of Hendershot's to climb the power pole and free the plane. They connected this fact with Mr. Kozicki's description in lines 22 to 25 of the mythical kid who takes "foolish chances."

Interestingly, only half of the students achieving below the acceptable standard chose Hendershot as the character closest to the mythical kid. The other half of this group chose Kozicki, indicating that they failed to see Hendershot's action as foolhardy, or failed to connect his foolishness with the description of the mythical kid.

Comparison of Students' Results on Parts A and B

While it is not intended that Parts A and B of the English 33 Diploma Examination be considered separate examinations, it is interesting to compare the distribution of scores on the two parts of the examination.

	Part A	Part B
A	6.3%	18.8%
B	37.5%	28.9%
C	44.5%	31.1%
F	11.7%	21.2%

In June 1998, considerably more students were awarded scores in the "A" category on Part B of the examination than on Part A. The scarcity of scores of 80% and above on Part A does not signal a new phenomenon; in the past, few students have scored at this level on Part A.

For further information, contact Victoria Forchuk (vforchuk@edc.gov.ab.ca) or Elana Scraba (escraba@edc.gov.ab.ca) at the Student Evaluation Branch at 427-0010. To call toll-free from outside of Edmonton, dial 310-0000.

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